# How to Utilize Our Free Time

Compilation Coommittee
Al-Balagh Foundation

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*In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful*

## How to Utilize Our Free Time

From the time man is born on this earth, his age begins to decrease gradually. This means that each day that falls away from his age, is detached from the calendar of his life like the pages that fall down one by one until the time which the tree of his growth will be stripped out of its last leaves.

Indeed, our age decreases, not increases, as, in our estimation, it apparently seems to do. The burning hours of age are like a candle dropping its melted tears. What burns of it, warns of the approach of its end till it reaches the moment at which it emits its last breath.

## What is Age?

Age looks like a temporal vessel, containing the days of our life. Its quality and the way it is filled is in our hands, not in the hands of others. People differ; some fill it up with honey, others fill it with poison, still others mix these together while yet others, leave it empty.

## Is it Possible to Leave the Vessel of Life Empty?

We doubt in this. Even our free days spent in amusement and vanity fill the age vessel with sighs, sorrows, and regrets in a Day called by Allah, the Almighty, "***The Day of Sorrow and Regret.***" It is a day in which all people are gathered in the presence of the Lord of the Worlds – from Adam up to the last creature – in order to be judged on how they spent "their lives" which is entrusted as a deposit with them.

Did they spend it with seriousness, striving, and performing righteous and good deeds? Or did they spend it by doing vicious and bad actions that caused long and permanent sorrows and regrets? Or did they mix a good deed with an evil deed and in their actions, were they among the losers, like a businessman who spends all his life in trading and at the end, finds himself bankrupt?!

## The Importance of Time:

If we look for the best one who evaluates time for us, do we see other than the maker of time, Himself, and is it not Allah, Exalted and Glory be He?!

Indeed, this delicate division of moments, minutes, hours, days, weeks, months, and years, is just like a cultivated field and the farmer is me or you. According to the endeavor of each farmer, the harvest will be yielded. And it is during the time of harvest that an active and diligent farmer will be pleased, and a lazy and inactive farmer will be driven away. How beautifully Imam Ali (a.s.) describes it: *"This world is the plantation for the Hereafter."* Whoever grows an apple, he will surely harvest an apple. And whoever grows an onion, he will surely harvest an onion. And whoever grows a flower, he will surely harvest a flower. And whoever grows a thorn, he will surely harvest a thorn. And whoever grows laziness, he will surely harvest regret.

Verily, Allah, the Almighty is the One Who divides the dawn, afternoon, day and night in order

to draw our attention to the thing divided, is of great importance. These numerous expressions regarding the measurement of time are nothing but small vessels within the great vessel of age. Perhaps, the moment you are presently in, will say farewell to you, and enter in the list of your account a reserved action and maybe it leaves you a loan from that account. And who knows that one day will come, for any of us, in which the chief of the bank will reject us and we will leave, disappointed, because there is nothing in our account book!

On that day, it is impossible to start again from the beginning because it is too late and we missed the opportunity. Shall we be pleased to return bankrupt and blame ourselves? Or shall we see working in order to add another fund and act according to the slogan which says: "*Save your white piaster for your black (difficult) day*", which means: Keep your righteous deeds for a Day in which wealth will not avail, nor sons, save him who comes to Allah with a sound heart.

Surely we will not find in the Qur'an an expression more eloquent than the following saying of Allah:

***"So, he who does an atom-weight of good shall see it. And he who does an atom-weight of evil shall see it."*** *Holy Qur'an (99: 7-8)*

Men will be shown their deeds in the Resurrection by being made to taste of their fruits,

but they can also see the good or evil of their actions in this life. Good and evil, when practiced on a large scale, bring their reward or requital in this life, as well. Note that the words here are "***he who does***", and thus, include both the Muslim and the non-Muslim. Even a non-Muslim who does an atom's weight of good will have his reward, and a Muslim who does an atom's weight of evil will be requited for it.

Then, some one may ask us: How much is an atom's weight on the scale of time? Is it a moment or less than that? However it is considered, it is a unit of measure in its utmost smallness, and this means that even the littlest deed of good to which one does not pay attention to, will be fruitful during the time in which a flood will overcome the people, and the smallest deed of evil, will be destructive but the good doers are saved from it.

Surely, time is Allah's grace blessed on all people. It is the white papers on which they record our deeds, be it good or evil, and people are responsible for it on the Resurrection Day. In this regard, Allah's Apostle, Muhammad (s.a.w.) says: *"Not a foot of a servant (of Allah) on the Resurrection Day, will move before he is asked about five things: 'His age and how he spent it, his youth and how he wore it out, his wealth and how he earned it and on what he spent it and about his love towards us, Ahlul-Bait (the Prophet's household).'"*

He (s.a.w.), also, says: *"Seize the opportunity of five things before you lose these five: Your youth before your old age; your health before your illness; your leisure before your occupation; your life before your death and your riches before your poverty."* It is worthy of observation that the question of age is repeated twice regarding age, in general, and about youth, in particular, due to the importance of the stage of youth, as well as it being the stage of striving, sacrificing and offering.

For instance, when a student surely knows that a question will come on the next examination, he will prepare himself for answering it, otherwise, he will lose a precious opportunity which cannot be substituted, with anything else.

The question is about Resurrection Day – clear and obvious - and the examination will certainly come: What is your age and how did you spend it, and what was your youth and how did you wear it out? The question remains to be answered by each of us.

## Wasted Time and Useful Time:

If we look at the amount of time we spend uselessly and try to make a simple calculation as to how many long hours go in vain either in nonsense chatter or in loitering along the streets, or wandering in front of commercial shops or participating in parties which have no limit and without knowing that we are committing "the crimes of futility" against ourselves with the most precious of what Allah has blessed us with, what will be the total?.

Just think of these images, in which we live, and, which occur perhaps daily:

- A young man may take his car or his father's car, sometimes, accompanied by his friends, to drive around the streets, squares, and roads without any aim and destination.

- A girl or girls may wander for long hours – perhaps other than shopping – in front of shop windows in hopes of desire.

- Young men may play football for hours on end and even though eventually they quit, they

repeat playing once, twice and perhaps three times.

- Young men sit in coffee houses smoking, chattering, backbiting and laughing loud.

- Others may stand in long lines waiting to buy their needs or waiting for buses while casting their naive looks here and there.

- Others who stay up at night may play cards, or chess, or sit before computers for unlimited periods or use the Internet to the extent of addiction without caring for the time which they waste in this regard.

## Is Play Forbidden? Who says this?

The subject, here, does not concern the forbidding of a thing or its lawfulness. It may be a thing lawful, but because it exceeds its proper bounds it is disliked and dispraised. As Allah, Glory and Exalted be He, created all things of great significance, it is essential that every thing in our life have a specific time, otherwise, excessiveness, instead, can be invested in the affairs which are important and useful. Therefore, it is said: *"What a difference there is between two kinds of actions. An act whose pleasure passes away, but its distressful consequence remains, and the act whose hardship passes away, but its reward stays."*

Then, try for one day only to count your wasted time and, surely, you will be surprised at the results.

While we read the bewildering results, let us consider, for example, that there are prisoners who wish to return to their free life to fill up every moment of their life with science and action, and it is nothing but the feeling that their free time passed away in vain.

And let us, also, consider that there are some people who wish that their days were more than 24 hours and, if they could, would borrow time from those who do not care for time.

Such people - the owners of useful time -have times in which they rest, and, at the same time, they renew their activity in order to continue their work, again, with a high spirit and prosperity.

We can make use of this opinion and consider that time takes its longevity or brevity from what we fill it up with of deeds. A quick glance at the life of great men and their success, reveals an important secret of their prosperity. That is the investment of their time in the best way. Rarely will we find among them those who waste their time in vain. The well-known inventor of electricity, 'Edison', is said to have never endured time, but, he used to swallow it up. He used to work, constantly, as if he wanted to achieve in an hour what others achieved in 10 hours. He disliked being absent in solving one such practical question but, it caused him to waste one week in the problem and was eventually futile.

It is known about various great scholars that they used not to sleep at night, except a few hours, for the purpose of making use of additional hours of their days. These people are they who always remember the saying of the poet:

"The beating of man's heart tells him that life is but minutes and moments, therefore, keep these memories for yourself after your death. Surely, memories, for man, are but the lifetime of a moment."

## Organizing Time:

Zaid used to complain about the shortness of his time, and became surprised at his friends who did many things like studying, practicing their hobbies and meeting their friends even though their time was the same.

One day, he presented this question to some of his friends. They told him: "The matter is clear. Organize your time, so that it will seem to be more."

For this reason, some *hadiths* (Islamic traditions) have divided time into hours and an hour, here, means time units and not sixty minutes. This means that there should be time for every action. Imam Ali (a.s.) is quoted to have said:

*"The believer's time has three units: The period when he is in communion with Allah; the period when he manages his livelihood; and the period when he is free to enjoy what is lawful and pleasant..."* Other *hadiths* add another unit and, that is, for visiting trustworthy friends who know our shortcomings. Commenting on the period of enjoying what is lawful and pleasant it can be said: In this period

(of enjoyment), you will be able to perform other deeds.

Though this division gives man specific periods for his essential needs, it is not an inactive prescription. It may happen that man's needs become more numerous and varied, but the aim at the division of time is to organize it in such a way that an action does not extend over another action, or to use up all time while other actions remain un performed or left half performed.

Therefore, striving towards gaining one's livelihood is required to meet his material needs; approaching to Allah, through worshipping and glorification is required as a spiritual need; visiting one's friends is required as a social need; enjoying what is lawful is required as psychological need; and besides these hours, there should be another important period for seeking science and knowledge in order to meet one's theological and ideological needs.

What is important to mention here is that there should be a balance between these units of time in a way in which worldly actions should not cause us to forget the deeds relating to the Hereafter. And the wise among us are the ones who make all our deeds an obedience to Allah, the Almighty; even worldly actions. However, who sits before a computer without previously deciding how much time he should spend in that sitting, will surely

find himself still sitting before its magic, small screen, after many hours passed.

And he who lets the doors of the meeting with his friend be wide open, will surely see that some conversations lead yet to others, and the meeting which was supposed to be finished in half an hour, lasts for two hours or more.

Indeed, organizing time, as we learn from the schedules of prayer, the appointed times of fasting, *iftar* (breaking of the fast) and the appointed days of pilgrimage (hajj), introduce us to the following benefits:

1. The abundance of time and blessings which were unknown before the organization of time.

2. It drives away from us both disorganization and the confusion in which we live as a result of the penetration of time and its negligence.

3. It gives us a respected personality by our friends, companions and those surrounding us.

4. It makes us live in the state of psychological contentment and spontaneous happiness in what we have achieved.

5. It makes us control time and not be controlled by time, itself.

## A Work Schedule:

Each of us is able to prepare a sheet of paper for himself and in which he records the timetable for his daily work. It is necessary to acknowledge the seriousness of observing the articles of the schedule; otherwise, it will become mere ink on paper. This method teaches us the following:

1. Time should be organized in a such way as not to be scattered in digressions and forsaken conclusions, and where one can be wholly engaged in a particular work which, as a result, has an affect on the rest of the work.

2. The above mentioned paper acts as a calendar which reminds us of the deeds which a wait us to be performed without delay, because tomorrow will impose on us a list of other new deeds, and a moment of our daily schedule will surely be affected on the timetable of tomorrow.

3. It is possible to schedule even preparatory time for each action. This may seem difficult because it is impossible to estimate the time of some actions properly and exactly, but, with the

passing of days, it will become a beautiful habit with which one gets used to.

4. There is no harm in putting aside time we call "free" just for unexpected emergencies.

As Muslims, our responsibility is not limited only to worldly deeds, and, therefore, our Islamic schedule cannot be separated from our ordinary schedule except in some obligations. Our time can be organized in the following way mentioned by one of the supplications (*du'as*):

*"...(Oh Allah) make us prosperous today, tonight, and in all days to use good and reject evil, give thanks for Your blessings, follow the Prophetic traditions, avoid innovations, enjoin good and forbid evil, protect Islam, debase and humiliate falsehood, assist and strengthen truth, guide those who go astray, help the oppressed, and comprehend the regretful."*

Indeed, this schedule, though it is full of righteous deeds and the rejecting of evil, is not necessary to be a schedule for one day, rather, it is a typical Islamic day which needs determination, practice, and prosperity and guidance from Allah, the Exalted and the Almighty.

This schedule can be divided into its positive and negative subjects:

**First: Positive Subjects:**

1. (**Using of good**): It should not be only a sentimental trend inclining towards labour, rather, it should be changed into an action which benefits others.

2. (**Giving Thanks For Blessings**): This means to reciprocate benevolence with benevolence, kindness with kindness and good with good. He who does not thank the creation (i.e. man), never thanks the Creator (Allah), and the best practical thanks is "***Give thanks, O people of David!***' *Holy Qur'an (34: 13)*

3. (**Following Prophetic Traditions**): Because this is the right path brought by the Holy Apostle, Muhammad (s.a.w.), who says: "***Say: If you love Allah, follow me: Allah will love you.***" *Holy Qur'an (3: 31)*

4. (**Enjoining Good**): This because it is the way to increase the arena of doing good and the spreading of reform and benevolence in a society, which may positively reflect on the happiness of the society and its strength and welfare.

5. (**Protecting Islam**): We should defend Islam and protect its principles due to its being the symbol of our dignity and the righteousness of our religion which represents our existence and identity.

6. (**Assisting and Strengthening Truth**): To strengthen truth if it prevails so as to spread it

throughout the world even more, and to support it if it is threatened by falsehood and oppression.

7. (**Guiding the Strayers**): To guide through different methods of guidance the one who goes astray from the right path and to inform him his secure place if he deviated his destination.

8. (**Helping the Oppressed**): This should be done by what Allah, the Most High, has granted us of capabilities such as: Wealth or responsibility or sciences because among the necessities of having belief in religion is to give assistance to the needy. ***"So woe to the praying ones, who are unmindful of their prayer! Who do (good) to be seen, and refrain from acts of kindness!"*** *Holy Qur'an (107: 4-7)*

9. (**Comprehending the Regretful**): A poor man looks like a blind man who sees nothing but that of meeting his own needs, and his regret will come by the fulfillment of those needs.

**Secondly: Negative Subjects:**

1. (**Rejecting Evil**): To give up evil means opening the way for goodness to be spread and evil to be straitened and decreased.

2. (**Avoiding Innovations**): Because innovation (*bid'ah*) means to insert something which is not related to religion in the name of religion. It is a misrepresentation of Divine instructions and Prophetic Traditions (*sunnah)* and invents that which has not been said by Allah and His Apostle

relating to religion, whereas, religion, itself, is innocent of it.

3. (**Forbidding What is Evil**): This is done by any means be it by hand or by tongue or by heart, so that the followers of evil should not feel compelled to continue, where they might spread their abominations among the people.

One who observes this schedule, both positive and negative, will find that there is a balance in the movement of Muslim youth, demolishing evils and performing good deeds. In this regard, a *Hadith*, describing a true believer, says:

"*Goodness is expected from him (a believer) and he is safe from evil.*"

## Free Time:

First we ask this question: Is there anything called free time?

We can surely say: No, because man when he finishes a work, will be engaged in another. It may be less or more important than before. Even sports, itself, is an unproductive work though it is productive in its psychological output for a player.

Islam - as we mentioned previously – gives man the time for which he refreshes and amuses himself and his family and enjoys its pleasures and delights. It even gives this time more value and importance, because it is a supporter of the periods of work and worship.

But, our discussion about free time is not that which gives man renewed energy, rather it is that a wasted time in which the youth not only scorn their vital and great responsibilities, but also, live in the state of useless, negative, and wanton time.

Mostly, free time falls into disorder when we waste our time and neglect its value, whereas, it can be an opportunity for seeking science, or for learning some new skills, or for correcting wrong

conceptions, or for helping Allah's creatures, or for meeting the needs of a believer, or to be acquainted with the issues of the Muslim world, or for developing what we have obtained of previous knowledge, or to become acquainted with a new friend seeking Allah's pleasure, or to strengthen an old relationship with a friend, and so on. Even if an unexploited time is considered out of the scope of age, because the real age is the age of that farm which was previously mentioned in a *Hadith*, is it wise for a man who owns a wide land arable for agriculture, to leave it unplanted?!

In this regard, one scientist says: I read more and if I become tired of reading, I take a rest by reading. He explains this by saying: I incline to reading scientific books, but when I feel exhausted of reading, I turn to read literary or history books in order to ease the tiredness of scientific reading.

Look at those who are around you. Do not you respect the one who stands before a shop waiting for his turn, or at a station waiting for a bus, or in a clinic holding a book in his hand and reading it?!

Do not you respect a man going on his way remembering a poem which he memorized before, or a verse of the Qur'an he does not want to forget, or repeats some glorifications which increase and strengthen his relation with Allah, the Most High?!

Do not you show respect for a person who holds in his pocket a small notebook in which he records a proverb or a saying he read in a

newspaper, or an information he got by chance, or an important number he found here and there which helps him in quoting what he says, or he records an idea which comes suddenly to his mind and is afraid to miss or forget it?

Surely, telephones now exist which can record messages, and wall secretaries are placed in front of houses to be used by visitors to record their notes in case of not seeing the owner of the house. These are clear evidences for the attention of the owner of the house as to what has happened during his absence.

A person who daily reads newspapers; follows newscasts and visits sites on the Internet or is acquainted with what happens around himself in this ever-changing world, is a man who is careful not to cast his time aside like a disregarded paper into a wastebasket. He feels that he is cut off from the world if he does not keep up on the movement of the world, and if his steady vigile is stopped, surely he feels loneliness as if he has lost something precious.

The people of an American town discovered that an illiterate woman learned how to read and write late and without a teacher. When she was asked about this, she answered: Indeed, I felt the loss of precious time that I had missed, therefore, I tried to compensate for it and, thus, I used to eavesdrop and steal a look at my small daughter

while she was studying and, with her, I used to savour all her lessons.

Thus, we should eliminate the following expressions from the dictionary of our life:

- I missed the train!

- What is the use of working now. Indeed, I have lost various opportunities, and chance always opposes me.

- Many people preceded me in that endeavor and I have no place, now.

- I tried and I failed. There is no reason to repeat the same experiment…etc.

We should replace the above mentioned expressions with the following: There is always time to work before death.

But, regarding "compensation of wasted time"; this term is not correct. Because wasted time cannot be compensated, nor can it be delayed. Wishing the period of youth to come back after passing away is a false desire which is captured only by poets and there is no possibility to achieve it in reality. Nevertheless, it is possible for youth to avoid additional negligence, and excessive loss by regretting and utilizing what remains of their lives, and not to cause their lives to be a plunder of play, levity and idle relaxation.

Through experiments, it is proved that laziness, unemployment and leisure factors cause deviations and corruption. In this respect, a poet says:

*"Surely, youth, spare time and luxury are causes of corruption for man and what corruption they are."*

We should, also, differentiate between spare time, in which there is no use, and a dedication to review, self-criticize, and be alone with one's self, or to take permission in order to renew one's activity. This is a part of work, not free time. It is something desirable due to its being the time which distributes more abundance to other times.

**Utilizing Free Time:**

Leisure is defined by those concerned as free time and in which one is not connected by the necessity of achieving a specified goal. It is the time in which man frees himself from any commitments and necessities of life, and spends it in any way he wishes. Regarding students and youth, it includes the period of their summer and winter holidays, week ends, time and permission out of their working hours, in addition to free time secured by the era of modern technology.

The following are some suggestions which include some means of utilizing free time, and we hope that our young men and women will find in them an assistance to their empty hours:

***1- Reading:*** It has been said that the importance of books has deteriorated during the past two decades competition with other media such as: Radio, TV, newspapers, computer, and the net work of information, but books still keep their value because of the following reasons:

1. All other competitions depend on them, and the most successful programs and investigational articles take their knowledge from books themselves.

2. The ability of controlling the book, such as: Selecting it, or borrowing and copying it. It is up to the reader's taste, his desire and needs to control the kind of requested book in any time and any place.

3. Using a book as a source for writing, and as long as there are researches and studies, sources and references will not someday be null and void. Even, we observe that various CD's disks, in reality, are archived books.

As long as a book has all these values and its importance has decreased among students and youth to the extent that they turn away from it, it was still the right of a poet to say:

"*I am the one who exchanged books with friends, but, I found no friend but books.*"

And we should not forget that the profit we gain from the pleasure of reading and its advantage cannot be truly appreciated except by those readers who are fond of books and have established, them, a long companionship. If we miss this, it is because of being overwhelmed by thesis and competitions, which we have mentioned before. Among the best ways to fill leisure time is by diverse and useful reading. In addition, there are some observations which help in deepening the

understanding of the usefulness of reading. They are:

1- To read what fulfills our ideological, spiritual and psychological needs. We should not force ourselves on to be against reading like a man who forces himself away from food and we should not desert books on the plea that we lack the dedication to reading, because once separation occurs, it is difficult to unite it again.

2- Always keep your pen with you while reading in order to take some notes on some concepts or opinions which may help you later. You can, also, underline some important concepts or mark them with a phosphorous pen so that you can review them easily without the need to read the whole book.

3- Reading may open for you, unexpected ideas in a book, so, do not miss them and write them down immediately, because they may benefit you one day in your ideological, cultural, and literary projects in the future.

4- It is better to depend on cards of research in writing down your information including the name of the source from which you cited it, the author's name, the date of its edition and the number of the page.

Nevertheless, reading does not only to apply books, but also, includes newspapers, magazines and journals and what is daily offered by newsstands. They present news and information

items about the different affairs and the fields of life of which no young man or woman who wants to live fully their age can avoid. In this regard, a Prophetic *hadith* says: "*The one who is well acquainted with the affairs of his time, is secure against afflictions, conspiracies, and confusions.*"

One of the fruits of reading is that of writing. During leisure time, young men and women can practice their hobbies, such as writing, be it an article or story, or poetry and so on, and present them to people of experience. By this way, they can improve their writing ability.

### *2-Attending Lectures and Seminars:*

One of the useful ways to fill our free time is to become acquainted with cultural and scientific weekly programs and literary gatherings. What is presented of lectures and seminars can help us enrich our knowledge and develop our ability in dialogue, criticism and diverse opinions.

And, if we participate in putting forward a question to a lecturer or the participants in a seminar, surely we will make use of it and benefit others as well. In this respect, a *hadith* says: "*Three are rewarded: The questioner, the questioned and the listener of them,*" and thus, our social and cultural personality develops and thrives.

Our observation of the way of asking a question, the way of dialogue, interposing and directing a question, teach us the manner of

dialogue and how to pay attention to points which stir further discussions of subjects or problems.

It is better to take our diary with us to write down the most prominent opinions introduced in a lecture or a seminar so that we may keep it as a cultural subject which may benefit us one day in time of need.

In these meetings and sessions, we may, also, become acquainted with a great number of educated people, writers, authors, and personalities who participate in such cultural, ideological and literary activities.

***3- Listening and Watching:***

The four mass media (radio, T.V., cinema and theater) are not only means of play and amusement, but also, they are instruments of education. An education through them may be performed intentionally or unintentionally, i.e., it comes directly or indirectly which obligates us to distinguish and diagnose it from audible and visible items.

What is shown and broadcasted through these media, such as, local subjects and other imported programs, are not all useful for listening and watching; some are useful and some are harmful; while yet others are poisonous.

Before these double edged weapons, we should have a strong and intelligent sense in order to separate the correct from wrong, and the well

from the unwell, otherwise, we will be victims of such informational schemes which are directed by specialized authorities, biased and purposeful agencies and net works. And do not be surprised if we know that there are educational, informational and social scientists, and psychologists who present, for us, their audible and visible goods covered by beautiful papers, but, in reality, they are harmful in Muslim markets. They often aim at invading our houses because the barriers - by the development of these means and their advancement – are indeed dissolved and cause the information media to enter every house without asking permission.

These equipments, developed very quickly and greatly in the form of astronautics, video tapes, cassettes, and disks which are cheap and simply transported, but they are heavy in presentation and burdens, and cannot be dominated by remote control. But, we, as Muslims, must control them with our desires, education, cultural, social and religious backgrounds which do not permit the watching of dissolute, profligate and trite films because they do not address anything except sexual and material desires and, sometimes, they intentionally aim at corrupting morals, distorting concepts, and turning values upside down.

And because these equipments are double-edged weapons i.e. they carry both evil and good

inside their propagations, it is necessary to use their good things and avoid their evils.

An example of the process of filling temporary leisure time would like the process of filling up intestinal emptiness; is it wise to enter everything into our stomach for allaying our hunger even if it is dirty, poisonous, dangerous and threatens our health, and safety?!

As a result of this, it is incumbent on us - onlookers and listeners - to safeguard, as much as possible, our characteristics, identity and our cultural and religious obligations. Therefore, we should judge and evaluate what we hear and what we see according to our ideology, culture, education and experience, otherwise, we will be turned into prisoners of these media which will lead us to dangerous crossroads.

Submissive sitting, for long hours before a T.V. motivates numbness and wasting of time and which causes disorder in the routine of other daily programs and perhaps causes ideological paralysis. Thus, it is recommended for each of us to distribute the hours of his/her watching in a purposed and selective manner.

The psychologists confirm that television – in itself- does not create the problems of aggression and deviation, but, it is created by miseducation by one's own family, relatives and friends. So, aggressive children and youth choose aggressive programs to support their former directions and

television becomes a supporter towards deviation, and violence.

And though these media have numerous advantages which mostly meet each other, some researchers have studied both advantages and disadvantages of television. The following are some disadvantages that they diagnosed:

1.Killing time, wasting age, and engaging both individuals and a nation (*ummah*) against performing their significant responsibilities.

2.Transfering irregular and deviated environments to our society, and imposing evil and degraded moral patterns on people.

3. Building a corrupted culture in the minds of the youth and showing the dissolute at the forefront of a society as if it is the norm.

4. Misrepresenting the contemporary affairs of the Muslims and demolishing of the obstacles that exist between us (Muslims) and the enemies of our *ummah,* represented by the Jewish Zionists.

But, still, we do not deprive ourselves of useful radio and T.V. programs which include scientific, cultural, political, literary, social, economical and health programs, particularly those programs which present the problems and afflictions from which our society suffers and which are discussed by experts, specialists, and professionals.

### *4- The Computer and Information Network:*

When computers came into existence, they not only filled up the free time of the youth, but also, occupied their time completely to the extent that they have no associate nor rival. Indeed, they exceeded all the means of entertainment and play before it. A computer, in this respect, is like other media. It can be used for the benefit of people or can be changed into a tool of corruption and destruction.

It is unjust for this active and brilliant invention, which has numerous capabilities, to be used only as a tool of entertainment and play. In it, there are programs prepared for teaching accounting, business administration, and the principles of driving a car, or learning grammar of a certain language. In addition to this, there are various other services which are too numerous to mention them, like the fields of typing, handwriting, designing, layout, drawing, painting and others. And the programs on the internet are wider in their content regarding science, information, politics, and culture, as well as, in different fields of life.

From the blue screen of the computer man become educated by its high degree of flexibility, speed of processing data and the capability of diverse coverage: Geographical, theological, social, development of positive thinking, deepening of the concept of participation, non-

acceptance of intuitions (self-evident truth), negative convincing and not surrendering to simplicity, all are blessings but at the same time foster indignation. It is upon us to make use of such blessings in the best way, otherwise, we will be afflicted with its indignation, particularly regarding the imported games which bear, in their undisclosed contents information and morals which differ from our Islamic morals and customs.

Therefore, it is obligatory for us to have spontaneous and supervisory over setting certain conditions which should be observed in such games. Among them are: They should bear human characteristics and have scientific value. They should be diversified and not be only for entertainment. They should not create enmity among the players, nor contradict the instructions of our religion, morals and customs.

However, setting long hours in front of this equipment, which has severe temptation exceeds television in its open and extended hours of sitting and which has made some countries, like Sweden, to specify the age of permission for using such games. They become concerned with the necessity of not introducing the young to the temptations of these games for fear of their education and the specified time in which they are allowed to use the computer for the sake of entertainment.

Indeed, the harm of being addicted to the computer as a tool of entertainment is not less than

wasting time watching a well-known game of football or being engaged in watching videos and television. Among the dangers of this invention, which has become a member of our family, is the decreasing of our circle of friends or social relations. The youth think that this invention has already achieved their wish and they are in no need of friends, but, this becomes far from the reality of a society and people.

Even the dialogue sites of the network of the Internet cannot achieve the same advantages and medical benefits which we gain from direct friendly meetings in face to face visits.

We should, also, know that even those feelings, and emotions and excitements which we get through the computer screen cannot be a complete substitute for direct meetings which contain warm feelings and continuity, activity and close acquaintance with others.

Magnetized disks – with the exception of their importance – will not replace books which are considered our companion in everywhere; at home, in school, in the car, in the airplane, on a ship, etc. The same thing concerning personal exchanges on the network sites will not be a perfect substitute for direct friendly visits whatever the attractive service or qualifications they add to it by its producers and propagandists.

***5- Learning Skills:***

Among the affairs which become available and within the reach of most young men and women are instructional, technical and handicraft institutions which offer practical lessons in different skills, such as: Driving, programming, trade, smithery, electricity, and handicrafts such as: Tailoring, domestic works, first aid, learning foreign languages and others. These skills enable the youth to have a better life and form a safe employment at their free time, particularly during summer holidays. Learning one or more of these skills, not only fills one's time, but also, pours its practical advantage on the personality of young men or women who will obtain fundamental knowledge in professions or handicrafts which concern them at the present and in the future. These skills are regarded among the distinctions and bases of superiority and are for the benefit of the one who requests a work or a certain professions specially when there is a competition. In this respect, a Prophetic saying (*hadith*) says: *"Every man's worth is in his attainments (what he does proficiently)"*

And having experience in these fields benefits a young man or woman even outside the area of specialization. For example, learning a foreign language is useful in having dialogue with foreigners, reading books written in that language or having correspondence in it, and, also, reading

intern reports of drugs or doctor's prescriptions or brochures which are used to learn how to run equipments.

On the other hand, among the best and the noblest skills to be learned by a Muslim young man and woman is reading the Holy Qur'an, its recitation and memorizing a part or parts of it or the whole Holy Qur'an if possible. And if there is no a special course for learning and memorizing the Qur'an, it is better to use cassettes or laser disks which enable one to learn the initial principles of reading the Holy Qur'an and its recitation. Indeed, there are eminent reciters of the Qur'an among the Muslim generations who depend on this way of memorizing it perfectly.

Finally, it is better to know that any obtained skill needs practice and continuity in order to be developed and perfected. In this regard, a proverb says: "*Practice leads towards perfection.*"

### *6- The Means of Relaxations and Entertainment:*

Since a long time ago, Imam Ali (a.s.) said: "*The hearts get disgusted as bodies get disgusted; so look for beautiful, wise sayings for them.*" '*Tarif*' in Arabic means 'newly acquired' because every new thing has its special pleasure, flavor and is a motive for the continuity of an action with great activity, unlike a tedious manner which brings for man tiredness, weariness and alienation.

Have not you tried that personally? When you change the direction in which you walk every day towards your institution or your work center or when you change the decoration of your room in which you live, even through simple technical touches like changing the position of some furniture, or when you change your clothes though they are cheap, do not you feel psychologically different for it. Simplicity in itself may be an art which is taste.

Imam Ali (a.s.) is, also, quoted to have said: "*Hearts are imbued with passion and the power of advancing and retreating. Therefore, approach them for action at a time when they are passionate and when they are in a mood for advancing, because if hearts are forced (to do a thing) they will be blinded.*" In this presentation, he (a.s.) offers us a new way of amusement which began to be depended on not only in schools and institutions, but also, in factories, industries and offices. Experiments proved that a worker who amuses himself during work in one way or another will surely attend to his work with an open and high spirit (mentally; psychologically; spiritually) and as a result, it will be reflected, not only on the quantity and quality of his production, but also, on his relationship with his colleagues in his work environment.

Islam equalizes between man's needs and does not eliminate this human need. So, it is better to give a part of our time to amusement whose

procedures become diverse and numerous. The following are some of them:

a- **Sports Amusement**: Its branches and colors are various and continuously increasing. The most famous one is football which is useful to health; psychologically, socially and bodily, and swimming and other kinds of amusement.

b- **Artistic Amusement**: Like practicing the hobbies of painting, drawing, handwriting, sculpture, punching, and handicrafts, such as: Sewing, embroidery, making flowers, decorating houses, and the collecting of stamps.

c- **Social Amusement**: This includes exchanging visits which is among its well-known procedures and of which Islam greatly encourages, correspondence, calling each other by telephone, celebrating beautiful occasions, participating in cooperative activities for the purpose of strengthening bounds of relationship among the faithful, in addition to taking long and short trips which remove most of the states of bodily, psychological and intellectual tiredness, and exhaustion.

d- **Tourist Amusement**: This includes paying visits to sacred places, and beautiful archeological, historical and tourist areas which give both psychological and cultural advantages.

It is worthy of our observation that amusement – in all its forms – does not mean to escape from the pressures of life, as some may

think, but, it is a readiness and preparedness to face it once more and not as described by others as the discharging of additional energy which has no aim, rather, it is a useful and safe investment of those powers at both levels; individuals and groups.

The following are some conditions of amusement encouraged by Islam:

1. It should be free from any corruption, harm, falsehood, wrong and forbiddance

2. It should be free from any extravagance and pre-occupation which may waste time, all of it. It is recommended that out of any amusement and investment of free time should arise a particular or general advantage, because it is dislikable for a young man or woman to be empty and unoccupied in either the action of this world or the action of the next world.

On a very hot summer day and in the city of Madinah, one of those who used to plot against Islam and its leaders wanted to degrade Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.), the grandson of Imam Hussein bin Ali bin Abi Talib (a.s.), whom he saw working on his farm at the height of midday and said: 'You are an old man from the elders of the tribe of Quraish and at this hour and under such circumstances, you are seeking worldly gains. What if death comes upon you while you are in this condition?" The Imam (a.s.) answered him: "*O Allah! Should death come to me in this state, it will*

*come to me while I am doing something pleasing to Allah, to spare myself begging from you and other people. I would only fear death if it came to me while I was sinning against Allah?"*!! Indeed, the Imam's answer is a precious lesson which has to be taken into consideration by the Muslim youth.

## Sleeping and Staying up at Night:

No doubt, sleep is a natural need of man. Allah, the Glorified, granted us this glorious blessing in having relaxation, and sleep during night hours in order to renew and revive our activity and energy after being exhausted by the difficulties and the deeds of the day. Without sleep, surely, we would have been destroyed by the continuity of work in the day and night. Therefore, it is considered as means of amusement for one's self, and body, especially for those who work hard and are greatly exhausted in their day.

But, it is noted that some young people, male or female, may misuse – sometimes unintentionally – these blessings. They stay up late at night and sleep late into the day on the plea of having nothing to do or they say, to pass the night awake is beautiful, so they kill their time with empty and talkative discourses. In this regard, a Prophetic *hadith* says: "*Allah dislikes a young man / woman who sleeps much,*" i.e., the one who increases sleeping for long hours exceeds the natural need of man.

On one side, some covetous people make use of their time and reduce their time of sleep, depending on the proverb which says "*Whoever seeks superiority, should spend his nights (in doing some activities)*", and are satisfied with the least amount of hours of sleep. On the other side, some young men or women yield themselves to long hours of sleep without paying attention to their age and how it passes in this slumber to the extent that their amount of sleep exceeds their working hours and production.

And passing the night awake, if it does not benefit man and those around him; nor there is worship in it, nor seeking knowledge, nor having a productive action in it, will surely have, not only, bad consequences on the youth, but also, its disadvantages will become more than its advantages.

The principles of balance – which was mentioned earlier – is useful for application and implementation of any affair in life, because Islam is the religion of both non-extravagance and non-negligence, i.e., it does not confirm either prodigality or negligence in any thing. In this regard, the Almighty, Allah says: "***And thus We made you a nation justly balanced.***" *(Holy Qur'an (2: 143)*

## A Final Word:

This is the glass of our age before us – Allah's deposit upon our neck – so, how will we get it back?

Is it full of good or is it full of evil? Is it empty and unoccupied? Or is it smashed, broken into pieces and spent on the pavements of play, entertainment, fun, relaxation, chatter and the meetings of unemployment?

Shall we use what has been said by some scholars who make use of their time more than others when they say: "We want to leave our impressions on time, and never let it leave its impressions on us."

One scholar expressed this in his saying: "The regret of great men reminds us to elevate our life and when we leave this world, we will leave behind the results of our mistakes on the sands of time."

The following are a collection of proverbs that help us to achieve the above statements:

- *"If you sleep on flowers in your youth, surely you will sleep on thorns in your old age."*

*- "If one is lazy in his youthfulness, surely, he will be a beggar in his oldness."*

*- "All the flowers of the future are a result of the seeds which you plant today."*

*- "Day and night have an effect upon you, therefore, do have an effect on them."*

*- "Do not fear a slow advancement, but, beware of standing immobile."*

*- "The present world is the plantation for the Hereafter."*

*- "Time is like a sword, if you do not cut it, it will cut you."*

*- "Unemployment is the mother of all vices."*

*- "The opportunity of a lazy man, languishes with him."*

*- "To miss an opportunity brings about grief."*

*- "This world is a passage, while the next world is the place of dwelling; so, take your passage (as a way by performing good deeds) to your abode."*

*In the Name of Allah*

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